

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-13
JUSE-00 NSAE-00 CTME-00 SNM-05 TRSE-00 ICA-11
NSC-05 OES-07 OMB-01 AGRE-00 HEW-04 AID-05
COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02 LAB-04
SIL-01 CG-00 DOTE-00 /097 W
-----111262 161119Z /20

P R 160952Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5392
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL MANDALAY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 1765

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, SNAR, BM, TH
SUBJ: THAI PRIME MINISTER VISITS BURMA

SUMMARY. ACCOMPANIED BY A 23-MEMBER DELEGATION, THAI PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK MADE AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO BURMA MAY 10 TO 12. NO NOTEWORTHY AGREEMENTS SEEM TO HAVE EMERGED FROM THE VISIT AND THERE ARE CONFLICTING REPORTS ABOUT THE BURMESE REACTION. THE THAI AMBASSADOR REPORTEDLY DESCRIBED THE BURMESE ATTITUDE AS "WAIT AND SEE", WHILE ANOTHER RELIABLE SOURCE SAID THAT NE WIN EXPRESSED TRUST IN THE KRIANGSAK REGIME. LOGIC FAVORS CLOSER RAPPORT WITH THAILAND NOW, BUT IN VIEW OF THE LEGACY OF ILL-WILL BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, THE MOST THAT COULD BE HOPED FOR FROM THE VISIT IS THE CREATION OF AN ATMOSPHERE THAT CAN LEAD TOWARDS MEANINGFUL COOPERATION AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND, GEMSM KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN, MADE AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO BURMA MAY 10 TO 12. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A 23-MEMBER DELEGATION THAT INCLUDED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER GEM. BOONCHAI BAMRUNGPHONG, FOREIGN MINISTER DR. UPADIT PACHARIYANGKUN, AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE THAI NARCOTICS
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SUPPRESSION BOARD, GEN. PAO SARASIN. DURING THE TWO DAY PROGRAM, THE PARTY MET WITH BURMESE LEADERS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT NE WIN, AND COUNCIL OF STATE SECRETARY GEM. SAN YU. THE BURMESE LAID ON NO MORE THAN THE AVERAGE AMOUNT OF CEREMONY FOR THE VISIT.

2. AS IS USUAL FOR BURMA, THE VISIT PRODUCED VERY LITTLE IN

THE FORM OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS. (GENERAL KRIANGSAK'S REMARKS TO THE PRESS ON HIS RETURN TO THAILAND, WHICH WERE NOT PUBLISHED HERE, WERE VASTLY MORE REVEALING THAN ANYTHING SAID PUBLICLY IN BURMA.) PRIME MINISTER MAUNG MAUNG KHA, AT A DINNER HE HOSTED ON MAY 11, SPOKE ELLIPTICALLY ABOUT BURMA'S EFFORTS "TO PREVENT ITS TERRITORY FROM BEING USED FOR THE COMMISSION OF ACTS PREJUDICIAL TO THE LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF ITS NEIGHBORS". GEN. KRIANGSAK REPLIED IN KING WHEN HE ALLUDED TO THE PRESENCE IN THAILAND OF "REFUGEES FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES" WHO WERE CAUSING "MANY PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES", BUT WHOM THE THAIS WERE COMPELLED TO ADMIT ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS.

3. IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICER, THE THAI EMBASSY DCM REPORTED THAT DISCUSSIONS DURING THE VISIT RELATED SOLELY TO THAI-BURMA BILATERAL QUESTIONS. THERE WAS NO MENTION OF THE PRC, ASEAN OR INDO-CHINA, HE SAID. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE VISIT FROM THE THAI POINT OF VIEW WAS TO DEVELOP BURMESE "TRUST" IN THE KRIANGSAK REGIME AND ESTABLISH SOME SORT OF PERSONAL RAPPORT BETWEEN KEY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ON BOTH SIDES. ALLEGEDLY THIS IS THE REASON THE THAIS CAME WITH SUCH A LARGE DELEGATION. HE SAID THE THAI AMBASSADOR'S ASSESSMENT OF THE VISIT WAS THAT "MAYBE IT WAS SUCCESSFUL AND MAYBE IT WASN'T". THE AMBASSADOR DESCRIBED THE BURMESE ATTITUDE AS "WAIT AND SEE" AND FELT THE BURMESE WOULD NOT BE IMPRESSED BY WORDS BUT THE ACTS THAT FOLLOWED. AS REGARDS SPECIFIC TOPICS DISCUSSED, THE THAI DCM OFFERED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:
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A) NARCOTICS -- NO AGREEMENTS WERE REACHED OTHER THAN TO FACILITATE THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION. THIS COULD BE DONE THROUGH A REVITALIZED JOINT BORDER COMMISSION (ANNOUNCED BY THE THAI PM AFTER HIS RETURN HOME) OR THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS. IN DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT THE FEELING EXPRESSED WAS THAT EACH COUNTRY SHOULD ADDRESS THE PROBLEM INDEPENDENTLY. THE THAIS ASKED THE BURMESE TO DESTROY ALL THE POPPY CROPS, WHILE PROMISING TO "CLEAN UP" THEIR OWN SIDE OF THE BORDER.

B) INSURGENT GROUPS -- THE THAI PM SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ALLOW THAI TERRITORY TO BE USED TO LAUNCH HOSTILITIES AGAINST BURMA. (BURMESE SOURCES REPORT THE THAIS, THOUGH PRESSED, OFFERED NO DETAILS ON THE RECENT MOVEMENTS OF INSURGENT GROUPS, AND REITERATED THAT INDIVIDUAL "REFUGEES" COULD REMAIN IN THAILAND).

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RANGOON 1765

C) TRADE -- PM KRIANGSAK COMMITTED HIMSELF TO HELPING STOP CROSS-BORDER SMUGGLING, ACCEDING IN PRINCIPLE T THE BURMESE REQUEST THAT ALL BILATERAL TRADE BE HANDLED ON A GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT BASIS. A GUB "ECONOMIC" DELEGATION IS NOW SUPPOSED TO GO TO BANGKOK TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS.

D) FISHING -- THE THAIS DID NOT RAISE THE SUBJECT OF "JOINT VENTURE" FISHING IN BURMA WATERS AS THEY KNEW IN ADVANCE BURMA WOULD TURN IT DOWN. THE BURMESE DID, HOWEVER, AGREE TO A THAI REQUEST TO ALLOW FISHING VESSELS TO TRANSIT BURMA'S TERRITORIAL WATER EN ROUTE TO BANGLADESH AND INDIA. REPORTEDLY, THE THAIS REQUESTED THAT THAI FISHERMEN DETAINED IN BURMA BE TRIED PROMPTLY AND SENTENCED TO DEFINITE TERM OF IMPRISONMENT, BUT THE BURMESE REPORTEDLY MADE NO COMMITMENT.

3. WE HAVE HEARD CONFLICTING REPORTS ABOUT THE BURMESE REACTION. A SOURCE CLOSE TO NE WIN HAS BEEN QUOTED AS SAYING THE BURMESE PRESIDENT WAS QUITE PLEASED BY THE COOPERATIVE THAI ATTITUDE AND TOLD KRIANGSAK SOMETHING TO THE THE EFFECT THAT HE TRUSTED THE PRESENT RTG LEADERSHIP BUT NOT THE LOWER LEVELS OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND THE EMBASSY ALSO HAS HEARD FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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SEVERAL CONTACTS THAT THE BURMESE WERE NOT FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY THE VISIT. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE PRESS SOURCES, PRESIDENT NE WIN WAS IRKED BY THE TONE OF THE THAIS' PRESENTATION, ESPECIALLY WHAT HE INTERPRETED AS A DEMAND THAT THE BURMESE RELEASE IMPOUNDED THAI FISHING VESSELS AND THEIR IMPRISONED CREWS. AS A CONSEQUENCE, NE WIN REPORTEDLY HAS ORDERED THAT A SERIES OF

ARTICLES CRITICAL OF THAILAND APPEAR IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS. ARTICLES DID APPEAR ON MAY 15 DISCUSSING THE PROBLEM OF THAI POACHING IN BURMA'S WATERS AND DEFENDING PUNITIVE MEASURES AGAINST THOSE CAUGHT IN THE ACT, BUT THERE WAS NO CRITICISM OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT.

4. COMMENT: AS USUAL, IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO GAUGE THE GUB'S REACTION. GIVEN THE LEGACY OF ILL WILL BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, THE MOST THAT COULD BE HOPED FOR FROM THE VISIT IS THAT BY IMPRESSING THE BURMESE WITH THEIR BONA FIDES, THE THAIS MIGHT HAVE CREATED AN ATMOSPHERE THAT COULD LEAD TOWARDS MEANINGFUL COOPERATION AT SOME FUTURE POINT. EVEN SO, BECAUSE OF THEIR INTENSELY SUSPICIOUS NATURE, COOPERATION WITH THE BURMESE WILL BE DIFFICULT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. IF IT IS TRUE THAT NE WIN WAS IRKED BY THE VISIT, THEN THE HOPED-FOR NEW ERA IN THAI-BURMA RELATIONS HAS GOTTEN OFF TO A RATHER BAD START. EVEN SO, AS THE THAI AMBASSADOR REPORTEDLY OPINED, THE BURMESE BELIEF IN THAI GOOD INTENTIONS WILL NOT COME ABOUT AS A RESULT OF WHAT WAS SAID DURING THE VISIT, BUT BECAUSE OF CONCRETE ACTIONS THE THAIS TAKE AFTERWARDS WITH RESPECT TO THE OUTSTANDING ISSUES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. IN VIEW OF BURMA'S CURRENT DIFFICULTIES WITH BANGLADESH, THE LOGIC OF THE SITUATION SEEMED TO FAVOR CLOSER RAPPORT WITH THAILAND, IN ADDITION TO THE MANY OTHER GOOD REASONS FOR IMPROVING BILATERAL RELATIONS. HOWEVER, AS WE HAVE SEEN SO OFTEN IN THE PAST, BURMESE ACTIONS ARE NOT SO MUCH DETERMINED BY LOGIC AS BY THE WHIMS OF U NE WIN.

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